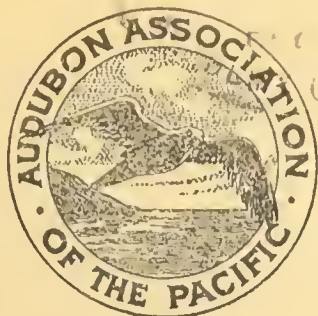


# THE

MONTHLY



# GULL

BULLETIN

VOLUME 23

SAN FRANCISCO, SEPTEMBER, 1941

NUMBER 9

## A Nest of Bewick Wrens

On April 18, 1940, I hiked up Strawberry Canyon, Oakland, California, in hopes of finding a nest of Bewick Wrens (*Thryomanes bewickii spilurus*). I was exceedingly fortunate in discovering a nest after but thirty minutes of searching. This nest was in an excellent position for observation, being in the top of a small, low stump of a former live oak. Surrounding live oaks and brush provided copious shade and also served as the foraging place of the adults. Five young birds were in the nest, and the parents were in close attendance. Although the male and female Bewick Wrens look exactly alike, I was able to distinguish the sex of the parents by their different vocal notes. I had previously discovered that only the males sing. After a few minutes of watching, I left the nest, deciding to return and spend the whole next day with the family.

Accordingly, I arrived at the nest site on April 19, at 4:40 a.m. There was little light but the nestlings were already awake, and both parents were carrying food to them. The female frequently uttered *whink* and *spzz* notes and an occasional *twce*. The male gave *spzz* notes and did much singing. The young were usually silent except when one of the parents appeared with food. They would then clamor in the manner of other young *passerines*. They squeaked very softly, however, which may have been because they were nearly full grown and ready to leave the nest.

The parents foraged separately, going from about ten to fifty feet from the nest after food for the young. The adults carried the food, consisting of small insects, larvae, and other invertebrates, in the tips of their bills. When the nestlings were younger the food was probably predigested for them, but at this late stage they took it "straight." The young were not given water. They probably get all they need from their food. Bewick Wrens are abundant in our southwestern deserts, where they are often miles from any water.

I was able to observe the birds for only five hours, for at 9:40 a.m. the young left the nest. In this five-hour period I kept a record of light intensity at the nest (measured with a photoelectric photometer), of the number of food trips to the nest made by each parent, of the number of songs of the male, of the number of fecal sacs carried away from the nest by each parent, and of the time spent in the nest by each parent during feeding.

During the first hour, light intensity was low, and the activity of the parents was correspondingly slow. Light averaged eight times greater in the second hour than in the first. Fewer food trips, five for the male and twenty for the female, were made in the first hour than in any other. In the second hour the male made three times and the female twice as many food trips as in the first hour. The female averaged twice as much time in the nest in the first hour as in the second. The male sang twice as many songs in the second hour as in the first. The first hour was the period of least feeding activity, although the fifth was nearly the same. The second hour was the one of greatest feeding activity.

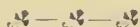
In the second hour food was carried to the young almost once every minute. Only one or two insects were taken each trip.

In the early morning, feeding activity and light intensity increased together, although without close correlation. After the second hour the light continued to increase but feeding slowed down. The weather was cloudy and chilly throughout the whole morning. The low light intensity probably accounts for the low rate of activity at first. The cloudy weather and thick growth of trees made it difficult for the birds to see so early in the morning. When there was enough light to see well, hunger sent their activity to a peak. After appeasement of hunger their activity slowed down.

Both parents removed fecal sacs from the nest. None was taken out in the first hour. In the second hour the female took out five and in the third hour two. The male took out one in the fourth and one in the fifth hour. The parents carried the sacs in their bills to about thirty feet from the nest. There the sacs were wiped off on branches of trees. The sacs were pear shaped, measured about  $\frac{1}{4}$  by  $\frac{7}{16}$  inch, and were white at the larger end and dark at the smaller.

At 9:40 a.m. one of the young wrens left the nest. The parents were greatly excited and kept close to the young bird, which hopped and fluttered along the ground under the brush. The male gave *spzz* and the female *whink* calls. The young voiced a few *whce-cep* notes. In less than five minutes the four other young climbed out of the nest cavity to the top of the stump, perched a few moments and fluttered away as I approached them. They were able to make level flights of about fifteen feet and alight on a twig, but mostly they scurried about on the ground under the brush. The parents continued their harsh calls and kept close to the young. Apparently they all left the region of the nest, as I was unable to find them after this day. It is probable that the young remain with the parents for about two weeks after leaving the nest.

Edwin V. Miller, Berkeley, Calif. August 25, 1941.



### A Bird's Choice

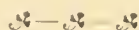
On August 3, 1941, I had the pleasure to see a common, but nonetheless interesting, phenomenon. In Berkeley, on the corner of University Avenue and Grant Street, there is a service station. All along Grant Street there are homes, little shops, lawns, shrubbery, and a row of fruit trees planted between the sidewalk and the curb. As one moves away from University Avenue the shops become fewer, lawns become wider, shrubbery is thicker, and tall trees are more abundant (a common enough situation in any town).

On August third the traffic was buzzing along the highway and I was impatiently making my way across the little field of cement surrounding the service station. A car nosed its way into the street and I was obliged to move over close to a little twelve foot high peach tree. My presence beneath the tree was heralded by frantic squealing from the middle of the dusty foliage. A pair of Green-backed Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*) flew out to a telephone line, and a nestful of young called after their parents. As I watched them, the young scrambled out of their nest. One, at least, made his first flight, a successful one, from one branch to another.

Not wishing to hinder the progress of learning to fly, I left the finches and did not return until a week later. They had quit the neighborhood. The nest was scarcely more than six feet above the pavement and plainly visible to any passer-by. I was moved to wonder why these birds had set up housekeeping in such close proximity to the busy service station corner, when block after block of quieter, more thickly foliate terrain lay within easy reach. The choice of nesting site may have been simply a fortuitous matter. But perhaps not. It is quite possible that the smell and clatter of traffic and the disagreeable concrete footing rendered this corner a sanctuary from worse evils than itself,—the cats, the dogs, and small boys so abundant in the areas farther removed from the highway. It

may even be that full-grown man, bustling about with his important affairs, is less inquisitive of birds' nests than he would be idling about the premises that he has developed for his own delectation.

David Gelston Nichols, Berkeley, California. August 14, 1941.



## August Field Trip

Thirteen members and guests of the Audubon Association met at 9:20 a.m. August 17 at the beach near Fleishhacker Playgrounds. Before embarking on the quest for hawks, some time was spent observing a more than usual variety of birds on the water.

The trip down the Skyline Boulevard as far as the Sharp Park Road produced a gratifying number of predatory birds. During the forenoon not many Red-tails were soaring. The air was still, and two, seen perched, were reluctant to fly. Several times one under observation returned to a solitary pine, the only convenient perch, even though the group stood quite close by. Later when a breeze arose, several were seen soaring in the usual manner or hanging almost motionless over a hillside supported by the wind ascending the slope. Other hawks were seen in fewer numbers. A Sparrow Hawk was seen to feed while awing by reaching back and tearing at some small prey held in its claws. A Sharp-shinned Hawk which dived into a Linnet-harboring weed-patch had not emerged after a minute or two so it was followed and flushed at close range. Perhaps it had hastily gulped its prey or, having missed, awaited the return of a possible victim.

The trip ended about 2:00 p.m. after another visit to the shore at the Devil's Slide.

The birds seen, with approximate numbers, were:

### Beach at Fleishhacker Pool:

Common Loon 1	Brandt Cormorant 5	Western Gull 4
Pacific Loon 8	White-winged Scoter 12	Heermann Gull 5
Fork-tailed Petrel 1	Surf Scoter 2	California Murre 3
Brown Pelican 1	Sanderling 20	

### Skyline Boulevard:

Turkey Vulture 2	Northern Phalarope 1	House Finch 80
Sharp-shinned Hawk 3	Anna Hummingbird 1	Pine Siskin 2
Cooper Hawk 2	Barn Swallow 90	Willow Goldfinch 6
Red-tailed Hawk 9	Cliff Swallow 7	Green-backed Goldfinch 5
Marsh Hawk 4	Bewick Wren 1	Savannah Sparrow 1
Sparrow Hawk 4	Mockingbird 1	White-crowned Sparrow 2
Coot 1	Robin 3	Song Sparrow 1
Hudsonian Curlew 15	Meadowlark 1	

### Devil's Slide:

Sooty Shearwater 6	Surf Scoter 10	Heermann Gull 8
Brown Pelican 25	Western Gull 15	Pigeon Guillemot 3
Brandt Cormorant 25		

Those present were: Messrs. and Mesdames Stephens, Watson; Mrs. Rose; Misses Blake, MacIver, Watanabe; Messrs. Harwell, Kirker, Leffler, Provoo, and Roush.

Frank G. Watson.



Audubon Notes

**September Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, at 8 p.m., in the Old Mint Building, Fifth and Mission Streets.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Joe T. Marshall, of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, whose subject will be "The Owls of California."

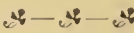
Mr. Marshall has made a study of these birds, and he will speak especially about the rarer species, giving call notes, and field recognition marks.

Members may bring guests.



**September Field Trip** will be the always interesting shore-bird trip, visiting various places on the East Bay shore, according to tidal conditions. As this will be a private car tour, please indicate whether you have or need transportation. We will meet at the Lincoln Avenue Station, Alameda, end of the Southern Pacific line, at 9 a.m., on the 14th.

San Francisco members and friends should take the "A" motorbus, at 8:05 a. m., on the Fremont Street side of the San Francisco Terminal, transferring in Oakland to the local bus. Ask for transfers. Bring luncheon. Leader, Mrs. Junea Kelly.



**August Meeting:** The 288th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 14th, in the Old Mint Building, with twenty-eight members and guests present. President James Moffitt presiding.

Mrs. Junea Kelly reported that on August 6th, 10,000± Northern Phalaropes with a sprinkling of Wilson were seen at Dumbarton Bridge, also downy young Avocets, and two Black Turnstones.

Mrs. Otis H. Smith gave a talk on the Quail, developing her points by the novel method of discussing the subject with an imaginary young person.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mr. James Moffitt.....	California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer and Editor.....	Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....	1695 Filbert St., San Francisco
Associate Editor.....	Mr. David G. Nichols.....	1713 Dwight Way, Berkeley

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m., Little Theatre, Old U. S. Mint Building,  
Fifth and Mission Streets.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year. Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.